

## **A Biblical Strategy: Using Provoking Situations for God's Good Purposes**

(This strategy is based on Lam 3:37-38, Jas 1:20, Eph 4:26-27, 4:31-32, and Gen 50:20. Prayerfully answer each question and memorize critical passages and concepts, then the next time provoked deploy it dependent upon God.)

**Let the provocation "move" you to.....**

### **1. EXAMINE your concern to determine if you have a fact-based, biblically justifiable concern**

- *Ahab's Example regarding Naboth's Vineyard – 1 Kings 21:4-6*
- *James' Counsel – James 1:19-20*

*Why has my sense of justice been provoked in this situation or with this person? Do I have the facts right? Has a biblical principle been violated? Is it big enough or repeated enough? If I am upset about something that I have incomplete information, or about something that is not offensive to God, or inordinately offended at something small, I am guilty of "unjustifiable anger". If I don't know for sure God is offended, there is no basis for my offense. If what I am concerned about before God is sin, I must seek to handle it in a way that pleases God both in heart purposes and action. This often requires working through one or more of the rest of the principles.*

### **2. Exercise GREATER thoughts of God and DESIRE for God.**

- *Asaph's Example – Ps 73:25*
- *James' Counsel – James 4:1-10*

*Temporal losses and disappointments are not to be idolized. Even if my concern is biblically justifiable, when I fight and argue about it, I have committed spiritual adultery before God according to James 4:1-4. I am guilty of "idolatrous anger". God wants me to delight in Him more than that which I have lost, may lose or never get in this world. God ultimately is the One Who in all circumstances (including this present one) "gives and takes away" for the purpose of provoking me to more deeply setting my heart on him and desire Him like Asaph in Ps 73:25. He has promised much future good.*

### **3. Exercise HUMBLE thoughts before God.**

- *Apostle Paul's example (Self-abasement) – Rom 7:18; 1 Cor 15:10*
- *Apostle Paul's counsel – Phil 2:3-5*

*I deserve nothing but death and hell apart from Christ, but have been given privileges and responsibilities to represent the King of the Universe in this provocative situation. If I justify my anger by believing I am worthy to be treated better than I have received, I am guilty of "proud anger". This situation exists on purpose by God's design for me to fulfill my role of being His servant for the good of others.*

### **4. Exercise SYMPATHETIC thoughts toward the person.**

- *Christ's example – Luke 23:34; Heb 4:15*
- *Stephen's Example – Acts 7:59-60*

*I grow best in Christ when I respond to unjust treatment with the same compassionate and tenderhearted thoughts Christ had toward His enemies on the cross. If I am not able to think tenderheartedly about those who have inconvenienced me or hurt me, I am guilty of "bitter anger". I must replace revenge and self-pity with sympathy for this person like Christ on the cross and Stephen while being stoned.*

## 5. **MINISTER** not massacre as a tool of the Spirit & the aroma of Christ.

- Paul's instruction - Eph 4:29-30; 2 Cor 2:14-16
- Heavenly Father's Example - Eph 4:32-5:2; Rom 5:10

*You are the aroma of Christ, the light of the World, a tool of change by the Spirit - God uses anger-provoking situations to awaken us out of comfortable living to address the spiritual needs of those who have hurt us. Sometimes it is only by our example that we show the enemy his spiritual need to change, sometimes it is by our words. This will replace "punitive anger". Let God draw people to Christ through the situation - that is why the situation exists!*

## 6. Examine yourself for any contributing **SINS** and opportunities to grow in Christlikeness.

- Thief on Cross Example - Luke 23:39-42; Joseph Example - Gen 39-50
- Christ's instruction - Matt 7:5

*Is there a sinful action, reaction or lack of right action in my life that has contributed to this situation-whether omission or commission. If so, you are, in part, reaping the fruit of sin in your life and getting angry about it. Are there particular character traits (Gal 5:22-23) or spiritual disciplines (Acts 2:42) in your life that God wants you to pursue more consistently? God used all hardship in the life of His children to train them in His righteousness more fully (Heb 12:5, 7). Are there specific areas I need to biblically examine myself for contributing sin or needed growth? What changes are necessary? If you respond this way, God will use this to prepare you for greater usefulness to Him and others in the future (Gen 39-50; 2 Pet 1:5-11; 2 Tim 2:19-21). You must put on these things in place of "judgmental anger".*

## 7. Evaluate if you need better **PLANNING** in related areas to potential lessen circumstantial provocation.

- Paul's Instruction - Eph 5:15-17
- Wisdom of Solomon - Prov 21:5

*Bad comes not only by doing bad, but more unsuspectingly by doing nothing - "make the most of your time because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). Things will go from good to bad and bad to worse by doing nothing. If you neglect today, you destroy tomorrow, and then can become angry at the "poverty" of today. Do you need to plan your priorities and time better so that you invest more redemptive energy in the area of trouble that is now provoking you to anger? What do you need to begin to do and what will you let go of in order to do this more faithfully? You must pursue change in these areas as you put off "irresponsible-based anger" (This is becoming angry because you have been irresponsible and now you have to suffer the consequences.)*

## 8. Evaluate if you are pursuing haughty **goals** (i. e. too difficult for you), or even godly goals **INDEPENDENT** of God

- David's Example - Ps 131
- James' Instruction - James 3:13-18

*God has not given me grace to do a million things, and if I try to do more than I am called to, I will not get the things done God's grace has equipped me to get done. I must not have haughty goals - it will lead to anger because people and things will get in my way of accomplishments! I must know and accept my God-given limitations and stay in the field assigned to me. Am I not planning well or am I trying to do too much? Or a little of both? Until I learn to follow callings in dependence upon God and not unrealistic expectations, I will continue to be overwhelmed and provoked to anger because there will be too much "traffic" in my life. You must pursue change in these areas as you put off "Martha-like anger"(see Luke 10:42ff). (This is becoming angry because you have taken on too much, or poorly planned what you have taken on, or have pursued these things prayerlessly.)*